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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: GERMAN EXCHANGE DIPLOMAT EVALUATES TURKISH MFA

Classified by Polcouns Janice G. Weiner; reasons 1.4 b and d.

[11](#). (C) Summary: A German diplomat who spent two months at the Turkish MFA told us the ministry's "top down" mentality discourages officials from evaluating state policies. He said a majority of MFA officials oppose EU membership for Turkey, though most support the recent EU-related legal reforms. The MFA lacks a translation service and an operations center, and provides very little administrative support to its diplomats. This exchange allowed Turkish MFA, especially at the working level, a rare opportunity to confront differing points of view. End Summary.

[12](#). (U) On December 6, we spoke with a German diplomat who had just completed an eight-week stint working in the Turkish MFA. His time was divided between the MFA's NATO and EU offices. The following are the key points of his debrief:

"Top Down" Mentality

[13](#). (C) The MFA ranks are peopled with political science graduates from just a handful of universities, though the ministry has recently made efforts to expand its recruitment pool. Turkish diplomats are highly motivated and generally well informed in their areas of expertise. But a pervasive "top down" mentality precludes them from seriously evaluating official state doctrine on sensitive issues.

[14](#). (C) Our contact engaged Turkish colleagues during lunchbreaks on controversial matters, such as the question of minority rights for groups like the Kurds and Alevis. On this point, most replied with the standard mantra that the 1923 Lausanne Treaty declares that the only minorities in Turkey are the Greek Orthodox Christians, Armenian Orthodox Christians, and Jews. Our German colleague pointed out that the Lausanne text, in fact, refers to "non-Muslim minorities" without naming specific groups. Moreover, he averred that the 82-year old treaty has been superceded by contemporary Western concepts regarding minority rights. His MFA interlocutors generally stuck to the official policy and proved unwilling to even discuss alternative approaches. In one-on-one conversations, a few Turkish diplomats acknowledged personal misgivings about GOT policy on issues such as Cyprus, Armenia, religious freedom, and minority rights. But in larger groups these individuals kept silent

when such topics were raised.

EU Skepticism

15. (C) Our German colleague estimated that approximately 70 percent of MFA officials oppose Turkish accession to the EU (Note: This is consistent with what we have heard from contacts at MFA. End Note). A majority, however, support the EU-related reform process and believe Turkey should maintain, for now, its status as a candidate country. This EU skepticism is fueled by the belief that Turkey has a unique set of interests and security concerns that will ultimately conflict with the requirements of EU membership. Many Turkish diplomats are also pessimistic about the future of the EU. Officials in the NATO department tend to focus on the U.S. as Turkey's key ally on security issues, and doubt whether the EU can be a valuable partner.

Honest Evaluation

16. (C) The deputy director of the NATO department approached our contact at the end of his tour, shut the door of his office, and asked for an honest assessment of the MFA's weaknesses. Our contact drafted a seven-page report that the MFA is currently reviewing. Report recommendations include:

-- Translation: MFA should establish a translation department. The ministry currently assigns diplomats to translate texts in a haphazard manner -- for example,

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officials separated the Annan Plan into segments and distributed them around the MFA, and to embassies overseas, for translation. MFA has not hired a professional service to translate the 80,000-page EU acquis.

-- Operations Center: MFA should establish a 24-hour operations center to handle crises. Currently, there is one duty officer assigned daily to cover the phones until midnight, leaving the ministry unprepared to respond quickly to an emergency.

-- Support Services: Our contact recalled that his officemate had to make all the administrative arrangements herself for a TDY in Asia, including contacting Turkish embassies in the region. Turkish diplomats spend a lot of time arranging their own travel. MFA could increase efficiency by improving support services.

A Valuable Exchange

17. (C) Our contact believes his two-month stint at MFA was worthwhile for both sides. The full-time exposure provided by these types of exchange programs allows for interaction that goes well beyond routine diplomatic meetings. Many Turkish diplomats approached our German colleague seeking validation for longstanding GOT policies. Instead, they were often confronted with arguments questioning those policies. These encounters offer MFA officials an all-too-rare opportunity to hear different points of view, especially at the working level.

WILSON